

**REPORT ON FOREST HEALTH
of the
UNITED STATES
by the
FOREST HEALTH SCIENCE PANEL**

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PREFACE

Case-by-case management decisions on individual forests are having unintended consequences to forests in other regions and abroad, to the global environment, and to other values people hold. To ensure the consequences are the intended ones, this report presents and analyzes eight policy options for managing public forests and for providing incentives to influence management of private forests in all regions of the United States.

One of these or another consistent forest policy needs to be agreed upon by policymakers before laws, incentives, and management practices can be developed. Otherwise, the various laws, incentives, guidelines, and practices will continue to have contradictory objectives--and different parts of the same law will be used to curtail, accelerate, and otherwise inconsistently alter such practices as species and fire protection and timber harvest.

This report is intended to help policymakers understand the effects of different policies for managing the various forests. It describes the present condition of the forests, eight policy options, and the consequences of each option. Both public and private forests in all regions of the United States are considered because policies on one ownership or region lead to changes in forests of other ownerships or regions--and abroad.

This report follows a "policy analysis" approach to the "forest health" issue. It proposes various options for management of public and private forests and describes the consequences of each option. It does not suggest which option should be followed--and therefore which values are important--since these are the decisions of policymakers.

While a consistent policy is being developed, interim measures may be needed to avoid foreclosing options through loss of infrastructure, habitat, and/or timber. Specific interim measures are not suggested in this report.

As with any analytical and scientific study, differences in grouping, averaging, analyzing, and interpreting data lead to variations. Each condition, effect, and number reported could be contested and refined. For making decisions, however, the important questions are:

Would the refinements change the impacts of different policy options for those values which policymakers consider important?

Are the refinements significant enough to justify the delay while the refinements are made?

The conditions, effects, and numbers in this report were developed with substantial care, expertise, study, analysis, and conscientiousness by the Forest Health Science Panel. This panel feels the results are quite robust; however, as with any analysis, the Panel welcomes refinements or critiques done with similar care, expertise, study, analysis, and conscientiousness.

As with any policy analysis, the effects of alternative policy options assume each option is carried out completely. The policymaker must understand that partial fulfillment of a policy option will result in intermediate results.

For example, the United States could avoid being a net importer of wood (or increased consumer of substitute products which increases the use of fossil fuels) if it created reserves (areas of no timber harvest) out of half of its current National Forests and increased the intensity of forest management and harvest in the North (Figure 1.1) through either timber management for financial efficiency or integrated management (Policy Options # 2 and #4). If, however, it created these additional reserves but did not increase management and harvest in the North, it would not realize the results of Policy Options #2 and #4--and would become a net importer of wood and/or increased consumer of substitute products.

The Panel will be available if policymakers wish further analyses of these or other suggested policy options.

This report follows the policy analysis approach as refined through management science. It attempts to separate analysis of conditions and alternatives from value judgments. The objectives of the report are:

- to clarify the forests' conditions and show how forests reached these conditions;
- to develop alternative policy options for managing forests; and
- to describe the tradeoffs/consequences of the different options.

The intent is to allow policymakers, the public, and other scientists to reach agreement on specific stages of the process:

1. the range of values (not necessarily the validity or weighting of them);
2. the conditions of the forest relative to these values;
3. factors which have led to the forests' conditions;
4. alternative policy options (as robust and creative as possible);
5. the consequences/tradeoffs of the different policy options relative to the values.

Decisions of which concerns are important, how important (the weight given to each), and which alternative options to choose are the role of policymakers, not the Forest Health Science Panel. The panel's role is to provide the most robust information to help policymakers make their decisions--and help the public understand the basis of their decisions.

Like any document done by scientists, this report is not intended to be the "last word in science." Rather, it will be most useful if it is examined, critiqued, and revised by as much open, constructive, informed input as possible. Policymakers will best be served if the best understanding and most creative range of alternative policy options is made available to them.

Once policymakers understand the tradeoffs in values of the alternative options, they can decide on an appropriate option for managing the public and private forests of the United States. When such a policy is agreed upon, the Panel (and/or others) can suggest specific changes in laws, incentives, guidelines, and management practices to achieve the desired policy.

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 B. Potential to provide and extent providing contributions from forests

FIGURE 1.4.2 The South:

 A. Potential to achieve and extent achieving forest conditions

 B. Potential to provide and extent providing contributions from forests

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 A. Potential to achieve and extent achieving forest conditions

 B. Potential to provide and extent providing contributions from forests

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- A. Potential to achieve and extent achieving forest conditions
- B. Potential to provide and extent providing contributions from forests

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- A. Potential to achieve and extent achieving forest conditions
- B. Potential to provide and extent providing contributions from forests

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- A. Potential to achieve and extent achieving forest conditions
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